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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Officers look for unbelted, drunk drivers over Thanksgiving weekend

Law enforcement officers across the state will ticket unbelted motorists and arrest drunk drivers as part of additional patrols intended to make sure motorists arrive at their Thanksgiving celebrations safely.

The Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) is administering federal traffic safety funds for the enforcement activity in an effort to reduce traffic injuries and fatalities. More than 115 agencies in 35 counties are receiving federal funding for the Thanksgiving traffic enforcement activity.

"Drivers need to be responsible by buckling up and driving sober, especially during high-traffic times like Thanksgiving weekend," said Michael L. Prince, OHSP division director. "Everyone wants to make it home for the holiday, and officers will be out to make sure drivers do so safely."

Additional patrols will begin Nov. 22 and run through Nov. 30. Participating counties include: Allegan, Barry, Bay, Berrien, Calhoun, Clinton, Delta, Dickinson, Grand Traverse, Hillsdale, Jackson, Kent, Lapeer, Lenawee, Livingston, Macomb, Marquette, Mason, Menominee, Midland, Monroe, Montcalm, Oakland, Oceana, Ogemaw, Ottawa, Saginaw, Sanilac, Schoolcraft, Shiawassee, St. Clair, St. Joseph, Van Buren, Washtenaw and Wayne.

During Thanksgiving weekend 2005, 19 people died in Michigan traffic crashes, according to the Michigan Department of State Police, Criminal Justice Information Center. Five, or 29 percent, of the 17 fatal crashes involved alcohol. Two of the people killed were not wearing safety belts.

OHSP administers funds for drunk driving and safety belt enforcement throughout the year to agencies in 55 counties that cover 94 percent of Michigan's population. Each county determines when to schedule patrols based on crash data, officer availability and unique local needs. For a list of Thanksgiving patrol dates, times and locations, please visit www.michigan.gov/ohsp.

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